

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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February 2025 – No. 32

Produced by volunteers and printed with union labour

REJECT TRADE WAR



FOR A WORKERS' PROGRAM

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and the environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Jobs and a living wage for all.** Unions should demand cost-of-living adjustment clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **For fighting, democratic unions:** run by and for the members to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **No to war and imperialism!** Slash military spending and build an international working-class movement against militarism.
- **Take into public ownership key sectors of the economy:** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

Join Socialist Alternative to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



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Solidarity with Posties

Ray Goerke

In November and December 2024, Socialist Alternative members walked the picket lines in five cities in solidarity with striking postal workers. We had many conversations and found the picketers were eager to expand the struggle with a fighting strategy to win their demands, which they saw as both necessary and reasonable. As the strike went into its fourth week, with no mass rallies or significant escalations, there was growing anxiety about whether the leadership of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) had a strategy to win.

The Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) intervened to force the workers back to work until May 2025 to “give more time for negotiations.” Although many rank-and-file workers and some locals were ready to oppose the CIRB’s back-to-work ruling, CUPW leadership told members to obey. Socialist Alternative members were at picket lines the following Monday when workers were set to go back. The mood was sombre with workers feeling that this was not the way that the struggle should end. In Victoria, Socialist Alternative members participated in a community solidarity picket at the request of the local rank-and-file union members. Our members helped block trucks going into the facility for about an hour before the police arrived and forced everyone to leave.

Canada Post bosses won’t make any new concessions in negotiations between now and May, so workers will likely have to go on strike again. If they do, Socialist Alternative will be there to stand with postal workers as they fight for their future, and the future of Canada Post. ★



Socialist Alternative in solidarity with postal workers

Defend Public Education and Jobs from Funding Collapse

Manny K

The Trudeau government has sharply cut the number of undergraduate international student visas, first by 35 percent and then a further 10 percent. This exacerbates a serious university funding crisis. University administrations and provincial governments across Canada have been raising alarm bells about the harm this will cause campuses. In Ontario alone, universities face a revenue loss of \$1 billion.

High paid university administrators will try to make workers and students feel the pain as universities and colleges across Canada slash jobs, departments and courses. Sheridan College, Ontario has cancelled 40 programs and Mohawk College has laid off 20 percent of staff. Vancouver Community College is ending its English language program for newcomers to Canada due to federal funding cuts, which prompted a student protest in January against its closure.

What is the Real Cause of the Crisis?

Post-secondary institutions became increasingly reliant on international students to fund their programs as provinces cut support. In the 1980s Ontario provided 70 percent of college funding; in 2024 it was down to 16 percent. Between 1956 and 1970, public funding for universities in Canada increased rapidly and reached over 2 percent of GDP, but it's been in decline ever since. Tuition fees accounted for only 12 percent of total university revenue in 1991, but this rose to 31 percent by 2023 to make up for the shortfall in public funding. These increases have disproportionately fallen on international students. While domestic student tuition increased by 19 percent over the last 10 years, tuition increased by 80 percent for international students, who now pay on average 5.5 times as much as domestic students.

Many colleges and universities see international students as a source of revenue, rather than as students seeking a quality education and contributing to university life. The number of international students in Canada soared to 1,040,985 in 2023. Many of these students struggle with housing, inflation, and the cost-of-living crisis that affects many Canadians. Housing and other services have not expanded enough to keep up with demand. Many international students are sold on the idea that

the exorbitant tuition fees will be worth it to have a chance to live and work in Canada after they graduate. However, more and more are left feeling scammed by the system as they are unable to find housing and cannot get a job after graduation that will allow them to pay off their student debt.

Now international students are being scapegoated in a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiment. The federal government's cap on international student visas is a cynical attempt to appeal to this xenophobic populism. The international student cap will not solve the housing crisis or the cost-of-living crisis for Canadians, while it severely worsens the university funding crisis.

Fight for Free University

Students and workers standing together can win public funding for universities. In recent years university staff have joined unions and fought for better pay and conditions across Canada. In Québec in 2012, the Liberal government wanted to more than double university tuition. It was met with mass protests and student strikes, dubbed the "Maple Spring." At least half the student population, a quarter of a million people, with widespread public support, protested on the streets for 100 days and stopped the tuition increases.

Socialist Alternative calls for free tuition for all at public universities. This would be easily affordable if the record-breaking corporate profits and Canada's increasingly wealthy billionaires were made to pay their fair share. University tuition is already free for domestic students across most of the European Union, and in Germany tuition is free for international students as well. Winning free tuition and a fully funded post-secondary education system will require serious organization and struggle against a capitalist system in which the super-wealthy freeloaders try to make the working class and international students pay for the costs of their failing system. ★

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Alberta – A Sad Parody of American Populism

Jared Blustein

The rise of right populism, alongside socio-economic uncertainty, is a tale as old as time. The process is almost formulaic. Populist parties and leaders emerge as working-class tensions increase and use powerful and divisive rhetoric to create a specter of societal collapse, often rooted in a vilified “other,” thus furthering working-class divisions. We only need to look at our neighbours to the south to see this playbook in action, unless you are lucky to live in Alberta, where we can witness this blueprint unfolding in our own backyard.

The United Conservative Party (UCP) - A Spectacle of Right Populism

Last November, UCP leader Danielle Smith won support of 91.5 percent of members in the leadership review and almost unanimous support for 35 policy proposals at the party’s conference in late 2024.

Elected in 2022, Smith positioned herself and her constituents as “outsiders,” who were being marginalized by a sinister progressivism. She supported the COVID anti-vax/mandates movement and promised to “put Alberta first.”

As the leading politician of a petro-state, it comes as no surprise that Smith has provided unyielding support for fossil fuel companies. The UCP conference passed a resolution to rebrand carbon as a fundamental building block of life, thus abandoning net zero targets and removing the designation of CO₂ as a pollutant — essentially committing Albertans to economic and ecological suicide. This followed a moratorium on all new renewable energy projects — impacting roughly 118 renewable projects — while providing over \$4.8 billion in subsidies to oil, gas and coal industries over the last four years.

The UCP’s allegiance to capitalism is further evident as it pushes for greater privatization in education, while cutting

existing government services. The UCP cut funding to the University of Alberta by over a half-billion dollars over four years and has prioritized funding for private charter schools to address the rising population and crowding in schools.

Smith recently fired a senior leader of Alberta’s Health Services because she was investigating allegations of corruption that involved UCP members.

Scapegoats and “Madness”

In early 2024, the UCP unveiled Canada’s most repressive anti-trans policies. As such, students aged 15 and under must receive parental consent to change their name or pronouns. Other policies focus on restricting “exclusively female spaces and categories to biological females who were female at conception, and their children.” Sex alteration practices are now classified as elective cosmetic procedures with no funding support, and there are only two biological sexes that can be used for government documents.

The UCP has also turned to another common target of populist attack: immigrants. Completely ignoring her own party’s efforts to increase immigration, Smith blamed federal policies for a plethora of issues, claiming that immigrants — especially those with temporary visas — exacerbate housing shortages and challenge education, health care, infrastructure, and other social services. According to Smith, Alberta needs to have greater immigration control, including granting temporary and permanent settlement rights.

Unfortunately, this is only a fraction of the madness of this populist party. The UCP is actively working to privatize health care, erase government Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs, abolish the carbon tax, ensure “seizure of Crown Land” from Indigenous peoples, cap the top income bracket at 10 percent (Alberta already boasts the lowest tax rate in Canada), and more. It’s clear that the UCP is explicitly working to protect and support capitalist profits. Smith’s right-populist character is further evidenced by her recent Trumpian embrace, attending his presidential inauguration, and initially standing against Canadian premiers uniting in opposition to Trump’s tariff threats.

Populists propose empty “silver bullet solutions” to working-class issues, essentially peddling a nostrum to the masses. Many workers are fed up with the existing economic and social order that seems to only be getting worse and may accept for a time a promise of salvation as they busily toil through the precarity of their everyday lives. But as the history of populism has demonstrated time and time again, this perceived promise of salvation quickly becomes the deepening of damnation. ★



Alberta workers at the Rally for Respect

The Fight for a Fair Indigenous Child Welfare System

Allie Pev

Canada's child welfare system is referred to as the "new residential school system." Meaning the removal of Indigenous children from their homes, families, cultures, and territories did not end with the closure of residential schools. It has been replaced by provincial child welfare services. In Canada, 53.8 percent of children in foster care are Indigenous, but they account for only 7.7 percent of the child population.

Chronic underfunding of the on-reserve foster care system and other family services that would allow children to remain in their communities has directly contributed to the deaths of Indigenous children in the care of child welfare ministries. For generations, the federal government could have adequately funded services for Indigenous children and their families. Instead, these services were unfunded. Two class action lawsuits against the federal government and a ruling from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) said Canada "willfully" and "recklessly" discriminated against First Nations in the child welfare system who lived on reserve.

The result of the CHRT ruling is a \$47.8 billion agreement to reform the child welfare system. This Final Settlement Agreement (FSA) was finalized by the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the federal government and signed in July 2024. Concerns have been raised by nations across Canada as to how this agreement will impact welfare services in the years to come.

Opposition to Agreement

The T̓silhqot̓in National Government opposed the ratification of the draft in October 2024, citing one of its main concerns that once ratified, the agreement would "remove the legal orders issued by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that currently hold Canada accountable to discrimination against First Nations children."

Chief Ross Perley, Neqotkuk (Tobique) First Nation in New Brunswick stated that: "the proposed reforms potentially deleteriously impact on the self-determination, sovereignty and autonomy of First Nations in administering child and family services."

Another concern was that the funding of the 10-year agreement would be subject to annual parliamentary decisions and not be binding on future governments. There is legitimate fear that a Conservative federal government would cut spending, especially for First Nations communities, given what occurred during Harper's rule.

The draft FSA was defeated in October 2024 by the full Assembly, with 267 chiefs opting to re-negotiate with Ottawa.



The Chiefs of Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation are moving ahead on a child welfare settlement with the federal government, seemingly cutting First Nations outside Ontario out of future negotiations. Ottawa has communicated to the AFN that its mandate on long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program "does not permit further negotiations at the national level."

Every Child Matters

Whether it was residential schools in the past or the violent and underfunded child welfare system now, the systemic removal of Indigenous children from their homes, coupled with the criminal negligence of the Canadian government that makes life so tortuous on reserve (poisoning of land, water and air, poverty, inadequate housing and services), serves to push Indigenous people from their lands and open it to industrial extraction.

For years, Indigenous leaders like Cindy Blackstock have stood up for Indigenous children and their rights to safety, health, family, land, language, and culture. Blackstock filed a motion with the CHRT to force Canada back to the table to negotiate with First Nations outside of Ontario on a deal to reform the on-reserve child welfare system for First Nations outside Ontario. The CHRT should not impact the Ontario negotiations but calls for the feds to sit down with the rest of the First Nations across Canada to either include them or negotiate separately.

Massive wins can take place within the flawed Canadian legal system, but First Nations should not be forced to fight within a colonial system for their children's lives. Instead, society should be organized to fully recognize Indigenous self-determination. This means a society where it is never a question whether a child is safe, fed, housed, educated, cared for, and culturally educated. All children deserve this. ★

Defend the Right to Strike!

Chris Fofonoff

The Canadian working class received a rude but valuable lesson in 2024: that the right to strike is only as strong as we make it.

As Justin Trudeau's Liberal government smashed itself into the rocks last year, unable to solve or even make any progress on the cost-of-living and housing crises, they nonetheless proved quite capable of holding workers' rights under the water. Postal, port, and rail workers were all forced to abandon picket lines and return to work without new contracts.

Urgent work must be done in the Canadian labour movement to make sure that the next battles don't end in similar defeat and demoralization. This is especially crucial because workers will be facing a more powerful and confident enemy later this year, likely in the form of the dogmatically pro-business Pierre Poilievre at the head of a Conservative majority government.

Governments Attack Unions' Rights

Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have a long history of breaking strikes and intervening on behalf of big business. Liberal prime minister Louis St. Laurent brought in the first back-to-work legislation in 1950, to break a nationwide rail strike. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1987 that the Constitution does not protect the right to strike, then in 2015 that it does. Neither opinion has stopped the state from assaulting that right, whether through 37 federally legislated back-to-work orders (and dozens more by provincial governments) or other means such as the Liberals'

favourite 2024 weapon: section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, which grants the federal labour minister the power to "do such things as to the Minister seem likely to maintain or secure industrial peace and to promote conditions favourable to the settlement of industrial disputes or differences."

These experiences show that workers cannot rely on the law or the courts to be "neutral arbiters" of their disputes with big business or with the government. The law is ruthless when it comes to restricting workers' rights, but it is highly malleable when it suits the interests of the Canadian ruling class. The main role of all capitalist states — including Canada's — is to ensure the smoothest possible functioning of a fundamentally exploitative and destructive system.

Defy Bosses' Laws

The legal rights that the labour movement won in the past are being eroded, even if these rights remain officially on the books. To reverse this process, unions will at some point have to defy the capitalist legal system, go back on the offensive to win greater rights and protections, and be strong enough to withstand furious ruling-class counterattacks. Backroom gladhanding can win some minor protections when profits are high, and labour must be placated. But today the economy is struggling, bosses have less room to make concessions, and they are confident that the union leaders will not defy back-to-work orders. The ruling class is becoming more ruthless than it's been for several decades. In the past century-and-a-half, literal battles with police and scabs have had to be waged on countless picket lines to secure the rights labour has today. Indeed, one of the most basic purposes of a picket line is to physically stop goods and people from entering and leaving the worksite.

The first step to rebuilding fighting unions is to start meeting in small groups with like-minded co-workers to discuss what needs to change. The process will have to take place both within and outside the established union meetings and structures, which can often be tightly controlled from above. Often, demoralized union leaders are responsible for derailing rank-and-file fighting energy in disputes with the bosses, whether through illusions in capitalist politicians or courts, or even through outright collusion with the employer. Active and fulsome union democracy is the best defence against out-of-touch higher-ups, many of whom will need to be ousted and replaced by new leaders who see the urgency to build the kind of militant unions this era needs and that today's workers deserve. ★



Locked out BC port workers

The Life of a Cashier

Anonymous

Small towns can be rough, as not much happens. Most of our entertainment comes from going up the mountain, talking with friends, and importantly, work. Most days go without a hitch. Customers come and go, sometimes you get a rowdy one or two in the day. Then came the day our boss had a bright idea.

Our boss is not the brightest. He holds the most power in this workplace. Most things that come out of his mouth will end up hurting us somehow. But for the most part, he stays in his office watching the cameras. When he gets bored, he likes to “pull pranks.” Most of them are harmless, if not annoying.

The most annoying prank he has pulled was when he got two of my co-workers to use plastic wrap to engulf the car of another co-worker. While most people might find this funny, what they don't know is that this co-worker is always at the other end of the “joke,” and they find it annoying and never enjoy these pranks.

As I watched them wrap the car, all the time I thought how ridiculous it was. Eventually, I told the co-worker what had happened. As expected, he was not happy.

After this, the boss was hurt that I had told our co-worker. I spoke my mind and said it was wrong. And I thought that was the end of it. But no, only a few hours later he put out a suggestion box, saying it was only for customers, and not for us workers.

He came back three days later to see what was in the box. Someone had written a note saying, “The manager of this store needs sensitivity training.” He read it aloud! People laughed; I could barely hold mine in. Ever since he hasn't pulled any foolish pranks. ★



What Makes Me Angry: Pick Your Poison

Larry Hyink

Trudeau is finally leaving. What made him decide at last? His party, most voters, and his wife abandoned him, dunno ... maybe his parakeet bit him. In his farewell remarks he talked about how proud he is of the work he's done for the “middle-class,” meaning, apparently, billionaire corporate fat cats, since they're the winners of his time in office. Workers are living paycheque to paycheque dealing with rising prices and stagnant wages, hoping they can avoid joining the swelling ranks of the homeless.

As other corporate shills line up for his job, the burning question is whether the Liberal Party will choose another flunky of the banks like any other Liberal, or go straight for Mark Carney, the boss banker himself.

Their choice is probably irrelevant, since Conservative Pierre Poilievre is likely to win the next election. His mastery of so-called policies that fit on bumper stickers and the colourful array of “ordinary guy” costumes his handlers dress him in seem to be enough for a lot of Canadians. He couldn't be worse, could he? He's also STRONG. Trudeau weakly and cravenly caves in to Trump. Poilievre promises, instead, to bravely and boldly cave into Trump.

On the supposed left is the NDP, “fighting for you.” As usual, this means begging the owners of Canada to let a few more pitiful crumbs from their obscene, and growing wealth go to working people. Oddly enough, despite the supposed accomplishments of this strategy, most working people are aware that their lives are getting worse, leading some, in desperation and despair, to turn to a poseur like Poilievre who will “unleash free enterprise,” i.e., hand everything over to the rich that they don't already own.

Finally, there are the Greens. Many of their policies are objectively anti-capitalist, but, as a party they fit the classic definition of small 'l' liberal: someone who doesn't like what capitalism does...but likes capitalism.

The traditional parties, despite their promises and rhetoric, have all colluded to maintain capitalism, a system that is designed to benefit those who own the wealth and NOT those who produce it. If Canadians want genuine change they should look to socialism where the PEOPLE are the owners of the wealth and get the benefits of their labour. ★

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Bill Hopwood

Trump is throwing tariffs around, especially targeting Canada and Mexico. In early March, all US steel and aluminum imports will have 25 percent tariffs and Trump has threatened to introduce the paused tariffs on all imports from Mexico and Canada, on top of these. This would mean that steel and aluminum would have 50 percent tariffs.

The tariffs are about more than fentanyl and undocumented immigrants. Trump is critical of the US trade deficit with Canada, caused by importing cheap heavy crude from Alberta. He claims Mexico is a backdoor for Chinese goods and companies into the US. Workers in Canada, Mexico and the US need to draw up plans to protect jobs, livelihoods, living standards and homes.

These tariffs could devastate Canada's and Mexico's economies and increase prices in the US. Exports to the US account for 17.8 percent of Canada's GDP and more than 2.4 million jobs directly. Canada exports 74 percent of its oil and gas production to the US and 54 percent of its auto and other transport manufacturing goods. Fishing, uranium and logging rely heavily on US exports.

The Canadian government's threat of 25 percent retaliatory tariffs on \$155 billion of US imports would boost prices in the US and hit Canadian production and jobs. Canada has considered blocking some exports to the US and ending government contracts to US companies. In response to the earlier threat, several provinces agreed to block the sale of US alcohol.

The US economy relies on Canadian oil and gas, auto parts and finished vehicles, uranium and potash, wood products and some critical minerals. China stopped exporting some critical minerals to the US, most of which Canada produces, in response to Trump's tariffs of 10 percent.

US importers would pay the tariffs on Canadian goods. In turn, they'd pass costs onto American consumers, put pressure on Canadian exporters to lower their prices, or switch to US suppliers, if any exist. Bosses would try to make the working class pay through higher prices for workers in the US and job losses in Canada and Mexico. Tariffs would disrupt the auto industry as components move back and forth between Canada, Mexico and the US before vehicles roll out the gate in any country. Workers would face workplace slowdowns and closures, job losses and pay cuts.

Some US businesses and politicians, including some Republicans, oppose the tariffs. *The Wall Street Journal's* January 31 headline read "The Dumbest Trade War in History." A US Chamber of Commerce leader stated "the imposition of tariffs... will only raise prices for American families."

A trade war would plunge Canada's already faltering economy into recession. It would also hurt workers and the US economy with inflation and disrupted production and



10,000 trucks cross the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit e

supplies. However, the US's far bigger economy would allow it to better able to withstand shocks, at least for a time.

Canadian Politics in Turmoil

Trump has upended Canadian politics. In early 2025, Poilievre was cruising to a large election victory. Then Trudeau paused (prorogued) Parliament until March 24 and resigned, triggering a Liberal leadership election, with the winner to be announced on March 9.

Trump's tariffs have complicated things for Poilievre. The two most powerful conservative provincial leaders, Doug Ford in Ontario and Danielle Smith in Alberta, responded to Trump's threat in opposite directions. Ford talks of war and stopping the export of energy and minerals to the US. Smith talks of conciliation and continuing to export oil and gas. If Poilievre sits on the fence, he will not present an image of decisive leadership.

Poilievre's election strategy was attacking Trudeau and "Axe the Tax." But Trudeau is going, as is the carbon tax. The election will focus on tariffs, unemployment and Trump, not on Trudeau and the carbon tax. Poilievre is the most Trumpish of federal politicians, hardly attractive to most Canadians.

Be Wary of "Team Canada"

Canadians are angry. Canadian nationalism has soared. Talk of a "Team Canada" approach is widespread. Ford hopes his "Canada Is Not for Sale" theme will win him the early election before Ontario's economy goes south.

Workers need to be wary of Team Canada. It sounds beguiling for the country to unite but the country is not united. There is a fundamental class division between bosses



every day

and workers. The bosses do not support paying higher wages or higher taxes for good public services. The bosses urged the government to end the port, rail and postal strikes. Most politicians represent the class interests of the bosses, whatever they may say about working people and the middle class.

Lana Payne, the head of the union Unifor, said that Trump “has enraged and united an entire nation that is ready to fight to defend every last job in this country.” Canadian bosses have not fought for every job and will not in the coming recession: rather they will try to maintain profits with higher prices, lower wages and fewer jobs.

What are Trump’s Goals?

The revenue from tariffs, in effect an indirect tax on US workers, could offset the big tax cuts Trump plans to give his rich friends.

US imperialism is the world’s largest economy and war machine. But its ruling class feels threatened as its position as the dominant capitalist power since 1945 is now challenged by Chinese imperialism and Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Trump’s ambition of ruling most of North America echoes the 19th century talk of the US’s “Manifest Destiny.” US capitalism — by purchase, war and bullying — acquired all its territory west of the Appalachians from France, Spain, Mexico, Russia and Britain.

A single capitalist state of the US, Canada and Greenland would be the world’s superpower. It would dominate the Arctic Ocean, now opening for shipping and mineral extraction. It would have access to almost all critical minerals, huge reserves of fossil fuels and plentiful water, if Canada’s northern rivers were redirected to the southern

US. Annexation seems unlikely, but Trump has threatened “economic force” to make Canada the 51st state.

Trump hopes some manufacturing moves to the US from Canada and Mexico. He wants Canada’s government to increase military spending, especially in the Arctic.

Tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China and the European Union risk triggering a world recession. Chinese imperialism would see an opportunity to weaken the US-led alliance against it. Faced with a world recession and a strengthened Chinese imperialism, the US ruling class may call for a change of policy.

What is a Workers’ Program?

When Trudeau threatened Canadian tariffs, he said, “We are all in this together.” This same claim was made during COVID, but it was not true, as the rich got richer and the poor, poorer. Essential workers caught COVID, while the bosses stayed safe. Workers should remember COVID’s inequality in responding to tariffs.

Unions and the NDP need to demand that workers not pay for the tariffs. They need to fight against plant closures, layoffs and loss of pay. Workers who lose their job or pay must be compensated by the government. Workers who have lost income must be protected from losing their homes or piling up rent or mortgage arrears. If the bosses try to close workplaces or move production, the workplace should be occupied with workers fighting for public ownership. Increased taxes on the corporations’ super profits should pay for supporting workers. Unions and consumer groups should monitor prices to check if corporations are gouging prices and profits. If large corporations receive government funds it should be either loans or in return for part ownership, and a guarantee of no job losses. There must be no COVID-era scams, when companies took government money, while laying off workers and paying out dividends to shareholders.

International solidarity is a key component of a workers’ program. These tariffs will hit workers in Mexico, the US and Canada. Rather than fighting each other, workers’ unity to resist the tariffs, pay cuts, job losses and price hikes would be a powerful deterrent.

Workers cannot rely on the goodwill of employers and politicians. Canadian unions must hold emergency meetings to discuss a workers’ response. In these discussions, workers will bring forward many good ideas on how to protect jobs and living standards.

The pain that the capitalist class will try to inflict on workers is yet further proof that capitalism is a diseased system that puts the profits of a few above the needs of the many. The world’s chaos makes it clear that a socialist transformation of society is needed so the economy can be planned for the benefit of workers and the environment. ★

A Socialist Feminist Answer to War and Imperialism

Grace Bodie

Under capitalism, women face oppression daily, as workers and as women. Capitalism is bolstered by patriarchy and an ideology of seeing gender as binary and that poses women as weaker, dumber, and as a means to an end for a man's power and accumulation of wealth. However, this objectification of women precedes capitalism: it is rooted in class society itself, going back more than 10,000 years.

Even today, women, especially those who are affected by colonialism and racism, have less access to health care, education, and face barriers to bodily autonomy, and the reality of gender-based violence has become normalized. Women's unpaid labour often goes unnoticed and as workers, they are underpaid.

Capitalism Leads to Imperialism and War

Workers today face escalating food and fuel prices, unaffordable housing, growing instability, conflict and war, as well as authoritarian regimes and increased support for right populist policies like anti-trans legislation. The relatively stable period — (following Stalinism's collapse in 1989 to the recession of 2008-09), when the US became the dominant world power — no longer exists. Inter-imperialist conflict has become a defining feature of this new era of global capitalism. From the war in Ukraine and the genocidal war in Gaza, to potential conflicts in the Asia-Pacific, the world has become increasingly unstable.

At the heart of all these crises is the competition for markets among world powers, in particular between the US and China. Capitalism's unrelenting drive to make profits leads to the search for and exploitation of new markets. Governments enable their respective capitalist classes to accumulate obscene wealth at the expense of the masses. And having exhausted its "peaceful" means of accumulation, capitalism turns to militarization. As Clausewitz noted in 1832, "War is a continuation of politics by other means."

NATO is a US-led, nuclear armed, military alliance that was founded by twelve countries, including Canada, in 1949 as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. In carrying out its mandate to "safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means," NATO has participated and incited wars in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Ukraine. NATO members, the



Women march for peace

largest exporters of weapons globally, are responsible for exporting US and Canadian weapons and military aid to Israel. In 2021, Canada was the 6th largest contributor among NATO members to NATO's commonly funded budget. Canada is facing increasing pressure to spend more on military: in 2023, its spending was \$39 billion, while environmental spending was less than \$3 billion.

How Does War Impact Women?

Women's oppression is magnified during war. Women made up 40 percent of deaths in conflicts in 2023. The number of women in conflict zones, who face sexual violence, is sharply up and many lack access to health care. A UN Report on Women and Peace and Security noted an "escalating backlash against women's rights and gender equality."

Women are by no means passive to this reality: they have always been and continue to be at the forefront of struggles against oppression, war and for peace and social justice. Women are protectors, keepers, and warriors for humanity.

Early socialist feminists, such as Clara Zetkin, understood that capitalism and war were intertwined. At the outbreak of WW1, a comparable time of instability, she said, "We are face to face with the fact that the driving forces of capitalism have burst the bounds of peaceful development."

International organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace highlight the realities of war and its impact on women. However, it is crucial to apply a socialist feminist lens to the reality of war, exposing capitalism's role as the basis for imperialist wars, and revealing the devastating impact of war on the entire working class. So long as capitalism exists, war is inevitable. Socialist feminists have a critical role in speaking out about war's devastation and to work towards a world that is safe and secure for all. ★

Join our public meeting for
International Working Women's
Day, Saturday, March 8,
noon Pacific / 3pm Eastern



Re-imagine Canada Post

Simon Schweitzer

Postal workers walked the picket line for the duration of the month-long Canada Post Strike, which ended on December 17. The strike received almost daily coverage with Canadians being reminded of the need for cost-cutting modernizing at Canada Post. We were told time and again that Canada Post has lost millions over the last few years as it fails to compete with more “nimble” corporate models, such as Amazon. We were encouraged to think of the long-suffering small business owner, who complained of not being able to ship their products and of families unable to mail their Christmas gifts. “Imagine if Canada Post could turn a profit” the coverage seemed to say. “Imagine if we could just get back to business.” Always the demands of the striking postal workers came at the expense of the propaganda about profits. Rarely were we given the perspective of the postal workers, who suffer high injury rates and low pay, and whose jobs are threatened by the modernizing reforms that management proposed.

Can we not imagine more than this endless grinding down of postal workers, as the crown corporation itself slides toward obsolescence? We could of course begin by imagining a Canada Post where workers can afford to live in the cities where they work, or whose livelihoods are not constantly under threat from the aforementioned “modernizing.” We could go further and imagine the “modernization” of Canada Post to mean its transformation into a public agency that does not see itself as competing against Amazon’s low wage and over-exploited workforce but instead its role expands as the needs of the communities it serves expand.

Canada Post for Communities

Canada Post could be at the forefront of a transition to green transportation by replacing its fleet of delivery vehicles, the largest in the country, with electric vehicles, but it could go further and contribute to transforming the electricity grid by equipping post offices with vehicle charging stations, and solar panels for power. In fact, much of what we can imagine centres around the post office building itself. There are more post offices than Tim Hortons across the country. Almost always they are in the centre of the community, so they are well positioned to provide services that are not of interest to for-profit private companies. These could include services for rural and remote communities, like providing faster

and cheaper internet by hosting high speed internet servers in post office buildings. Postal bus services could serve rural areas, which are currently without buses. Reviving the Food Mail Program would help alleviate the sky-high food prices many remote northern communities face.

Canada had a postal banking program until it was scrapped in 1968 as a gift to Bay Street. Restoring it by Canada Post operating banking services in every post office would allow access to in-person banking to many communities that have a post office but not to a local branch of one of Canada’s large private banks. Services could include chequing and savings accounts, loans, and insurance.

“There are more post offices than Tim Hortons across the country.”

Canada Post, although a publicly owned company, is not funded by government; instead, it must operate on its own revenues and reserves. At the same time, Canada Post’s mandate requires it to serve rural and northern communities that effectively ensures it loses money. The companies, which will only do what is profitable, would never willingly serve these places. To imagine any of the above expansions of Canada Post’s role in the lives of our communities we must first imagine a crown corporation that receives funding from the government and rather than having to cut wages, automate workers out of jobs and stretch the remaining workers to the breaking point, and raise prices, can justify its place in society by how well and effectively it serves the needs of communities across the country.

While this vision was not a large factor in the recent strike, the postal workers’ union should step up their campaign “Delivering Community Power.” ★

More information on the campaign:
deliveringcommunitypower.ca



Postal workers support Delivering Community Power

Trump 2.0: We Lose Unless We Fight

R O'Brien and Martin LeBrun

Trump's second presidency is more turbulent than his first. He is not the cause of the unstable world, but a product of it. However, he will continue to contribute to the deteriorating situation. His threat to take over Gaza, Greenland and the Panama Canal, along with making Canada the 51st state, all add to global tensions.

Trump will increase the global trend away from neoliberal "hands-off" globalization, and towards a new era of state intervention and protection. These policies will intensify and accelerate the economic decoupling between the US and China. Tariffs and sanctions, levied against both enemies and allies, currently appear to be Trump's favourite method to coerce countries into compliance and damage adversaries. He hopes the revenue from tariffs will pay for his tax cut for the rich and encourage the US's capitalist class to reindustrialize in the absence of cheaper Chinese competition. However, his policies will only harm the working class.

Invest in Public Services not Bombs

Trump's call for NATO countries to increase military spending to 5 percent of GDP increases the likelihood of military conflicts between the US and its allies against China's emerging bloc. Every dollar spent on the military, is a dollar not spent on essential public services.

Trump's protectionist policies will not deliver his promises to US workers. The inclusion of 2 percent of all US billionaires in his cabinet clearly shows his priorities. The members of his administration are worth at least \$382.2 billion, more than the total GDP of 172 countries. The bosses are lining up to fawn on Trump. Tariffs will increase the cost of living. Tax cuts for the rich and increased military spending, along with Musk's goal of cutting \$2 trillion from public spending, will mean much poorer services. Trump has pledged to boost fossil fuel production with "drill, baby drill." This, along with slashing environmental rules, will increase already devastating climate disasters.



Protest against mass deportations in Houston

Trump's policies won't resolve the underlying causes of the economic crisis, which stem from capitalist profit-seeking. To distract from the economic failings, Trump is targeting immigrants with mass deportations. He is stoking discrimination and oppression. He has already challenged trans peoples' right to exist. His firing of Gwynne Wilcox, a senior staffer at the National Labor Relations Board, points to future anti-union actions. The proposed freeze on all grants and loans by the federal government is a warning of the coming attacks on key services for workers and the poor.

"US big business has two political parties; the working class needs its own party."

Workers Can Stop Trump

Since Trump's re-election, there has been a defeatist mood among the broader left. Some falsely view his victory as evidence of an irreversible shift to the right by American voters, rather than as a rejection of pro-corporate Democrats. Politics extend beyond electoral politics. In 2017, thousands occupied US airports, forcing Trump to cancel his ban on refugee and Muslim immigrants. Again, in 2019, airport and airline workers threatened to paralyze US airports, forcing Trump to end his government shutdown.

Such strategies can work again to oppose Trump and protect the rights of workers, women, and LGBTQ+ people. The Democrats cannot be trusted to protect these rights, as they have demonstrated time and time again. They failed to bring in Medicare for All, raise the minimum wage and protect abortion in law. Results can only come from an organized and motivated fighting working class. The strategies that worked in Trump's first term must be expanded to meet the capitalist crisis.

US big business has two political parties; the working class needs its own party. It would campaign in workplaces and communities, with policies to tax the billionaires and corporations to pay for good jobs and services. It would argue to protect the environment and democratic rights. It would oppose the drive to war and the massive wasteful military spending. A workers' party in the US would really transform society and give hope to millions in the US and worldwide. ★

More on the US:
socialistalternative.org

Trump Advocates for Ethnic Cleansing

Ray Goerke

The January ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was met with mass relief. For millions, it seemed like there might finally be a reprieve, however brief, after enduring 460 days of hell in Israel's war of extermination. Relief was felt also at the protest site, where families demanded the return of loved ones, abducted and held as unwilling collateral in this horrific nightmare, and by working-class people around the world, who have been sickened by the acts of genocidal violence at the hands of the Israeli state.

Trump and Netanyahu Threaten More Death

The relief was short-lived. The ceasefire is now hanging by a thread, and the resumption of violence appears to be just a matter of time. While President Trump claimed credit for forcing Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire, he dashed all hope of it lasting by saying the US would take over Gaza, and that Palestinians could be relocated: in effect ethnic cleansing. He called for Gazans to be permanently resettled in Egypt or Jordan. Whether or not he believes that Gaza could become a "riviera," or if he merely sees this as a negotiating tactic, such talk has destroyed his credibility in the Arab world and enraged millions. Israel's far right is emboldened, and Netanyahu has vowed that he will resume the war in Gaza, threatening to "open the gates of hell."

Trump has no compunction about sacrificing the lives of Palestinians to achieve the goals of US imperialism, and in his words "let all hell break loose" in Gaza and the West Bank if he doesn't get exactly what he wants. Since October 2023, the Israeli military has destroyed 92 percent of housing units, 80 percent of commercial buildings, and 68 percent of cropland in Gaza, and has killed at least 2 percent of the population of Gaza.

"Trump has no compunction about sacrificing the lives of Palestinians to achieve the goals of US imperialism"

The January ceasefire agreement differs little from deals rejected by Netanyahu since May 2024. Yet in those seven months the Israeli regime continued the extermination and terrorization of Palestinians and created famine conditions in Gaza. It carried out assassinations and invaded Lebanon, weakening Hezbollah. US imperialism stood by Israel, with bombs, missiles and aircraft attacks on the Houthis in Yemen. That the deal became acceptable in January suggests that these events were in part the aims in themselves, with Hamas being a useful foil for selling Israeli military policy to the public.



Destruction of Gaza (Photo: Ashraf Amra, Anadolu Agency)

US Imperialism Strengthened

The US and Israel have achieved a major shift in their favour in the region. None of their enemies were able to seriously slow down Israel's advance, including Iran, whose retaliatory missile strikes were mostly symbolic gestures. Trump has openly raised the idea of a joint military attack against Iran. The fall of the Assad dictatorship, aided by Israeli forces, weakens Iran's and Russia's influence in the region.

The basic nature of the Netanyahu government and the state of Israel remain the same as before. Pressure is needed to demand the continuation of the ceasefire, a complete end to the war, and the withdrawal of all occupying forces. The Netanyahu government is historically unpopular in Israel, and while most Israelis supported the war under the false pretense that it was necessary for the national defence of Israel, there may be opposition to breaking the ceasefire without a major provocation from Hamas. But Trump's bellicose rhetoric only makes the situation more unstable, and the possibility of resumed Israeli attacks remains very high.

Israel is US imperialism's crucial ally in the Middle East, and is part of the global inter-imperialist conflict between the two main blocs led by the US and China that continues its march towards escalation of military conflict. The cause of Palestinian survival is thus bound up with the cause of the international working class. The labour movement must do more to organize opposition and resistance in western imperialist countries against their own governments, including in Canada, to completely end material aid for the Israeli military, and to stop the march towards global conflict and war! ★

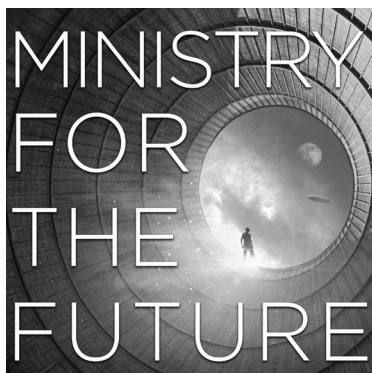
Book Review: *Ministry for the Future*

Tim Heffernan

The title has an Orwellian ring to it — think 1984’s “Ministry of Truth.” For Kim Stanley Robinson, an admired science fiction author, the Ministry is something more benign, an international government organization mandated to deal with the climate crisis. The novel travels from 2025 to 2050, with scary and realistic projections for the future.

A heat wave in India causes 20 million deaths in one week. In reaction, an underground movement forms that assassinates fossil fuel executives, blows up refineries, and shoots down airliners. In an unlikely response, governments are shocked into action and start throwing everything they can at addressing the climate crisis. They launch ambitious geo-engineering projects to increase the Earth’s reflectivity and slow the melting of glaciers. Central bankers issue “carbon coins,” effectively paying people either to sequester carbon or to not produce it. It becomes more profitable for fossil fuel companies to leave fossil fuels in the ground than to extract it. In addition to reversing the climate crisis, these interventions permit governments to cap wealth and institute something like a universal basic income.

The novel’s strength is its grappling with capitalist economics: how the oil and gas industry, banks and the ultra rich are holding back any action on climate change. In a *Jacobin* interview, Robinson says “If we could institute some of these good ideas, we could quickly



shift from a capitalism to a post-capitalism that is more sustainable and more socialist.” Unfortunately, having outlined the capitalist roots of the crisis, the novel lays out an unrealistic blueprint for a way out. Robinson sees optimistic political developments at every turn with the world’s capitalist governments cooperating to solve the problems, implementing wealth caps, and allowing vast areas of their own territory to be reclaimed by native flora and fauna.

Ministry for the Future has a lot of science, politics and economics and is a solid, mesmerizing novel. However, it lacks an understanding of the necessary role of the working class and a socialist revolution in providing a realistic solution to the climate crisis ★

Working-Class History: Postal Strike of 1975

Uros Novakovic and Bill Hopwood

In December 1975, the fourth Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike in four years and the longest strike in Canada Post’s history ended. After the victorious, although illegal, 1965 postal strike won most federal employees collective bargaining and the right to strike,



management tried to restore their control. They constantly harassed the workforce, pushed automation to reduce the control that workers had with manual sorting and hired part-time, mainly women workers on the lower pay levels.

Pay — this was a time of high inflation — job security and limits on casual workers were central to the 1975 strike. The union criticized the 1967 *Public Service Staff Relations Act*, for “strangling the bargaining process” by sowing confusion and obscuring real issues.

On October 16, 1975, Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal government proposed wage control legislation. On October 21, 70 percent of the workers voted in favour of the strike. The strike had a significant impact on Canadian society and the economy. However, the government did not want to break its own policies in its first few weeks, preferring to wait to exhaust the unions’ funds. On December 2, a narrow majority, 51.8 percent, voted to return to work. In Montreal, the most militant workers continued a work-to-rule. As many issues were unresolved, there were illegal strikes in 1976 and 1977. In 1978, another national strike was met with back-to-work legislation, and the union president was jailed for refusing to comply.

The ruling-class propaganda of 1975 is familiar today. Union demands were portrayed as the cause of inflation and an obstacle to technological progress. Denying the right to strike and/or privatization were presented as potential solutions.

Although the 1975 strike gained little beyond what had been on the table when the strike started, apart from the final agreement having language to protect jobs, the strike was part of the process of transforming the union. A more determined leadership was elected, and the strike fund was increased. Women became active in the union, which culminated in the 1981 strike that won paid maternity leave for postal workers and most Canadians. ★

World in Peril *(continued from p.16)*

Three years ago, Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine. Zelenskyy and other European leaders are alarmed at Trump's bilateral discussions with Putin, cautioning against clinching a peace deal without Ukraine's and their involvement. Kaja Kallas, of the European Commission, said this was "appeasement" of Russia, and that appeasement has never worked. European leaders are also fearful of their own countries' security. Trump is also proposing to plunder Ukraine's resources and income. Other conflict areas include the Horn of Africa, the Congo and the Sahel as well as Pakistan. Resistance groups opposing the Myanmar military dictatorship appear to be making strategic and territorial gains and China may become more active in this conflict.

Rise of Right Populism

The rise of the populist right is partly fueled by the anger and despair over falling living standards and the loss of stable, good union jobs. For many, the future looks grim. Regions of the US that were previously solid working-class and Democrat strongholds are now industrial wastelands with abandoned factories, and with devastated forests and parched agricultural lands. Workers have been forced into the part-time, low paid, temporary, gig economy. Rising inflation, service cuts and inadequate health care just add insult to the injury. Many have given up on the American Dream: having a better life than that of their parents, and despair of a brighter future for their children.

Trump's MAGA narrative both stoked fears and gave people hope that a better life is possible, if only the "deep state" and the failed liberal policies were replaced, and well-paid jobs were restored. But in fact, Trump points to an imagined better past. This story has been taken up by the right in other countries, with the scapegoats being immigrants and asylum seekers as well as trans and LGBTQ+ people.

In Germany, racism and the far-right AfD has gained traction. In 2016, Germany's economy had the world's largest highest trade surplus, worth \$310 billion. While Germany is still the world's third biggest economy, after the US and China, thousands of workers are facing loss of well-paid union jobs in several industrial giants. Companies are looking to outsource production and cut jobs to shore up their profits, while unions are calling to stop deindustrialization.

Climate Disasters

Attention to the perils of imperialism, war and the far right has put the fight against climate change on the back foot. But the climate catastrophe is the existential crisis for humanity as capitalism makes human life increasingly perilous on the planet. The rich profit from human misery and environmental destruction. More money is spent on war than on fighting climate change, and military expenditure contributes significantly to climate change. The right either sees climate change as a conspiratorial hoax or not worth spending money on. Yet, climate disasters like the devastating Los Angeles fires continue to imperil people's lives and homes, contributing significantly to migration and displacement.

The Remedy: A Fighting Working Class

The common denominator in these interrelated crises is capitalism. Socialists need to learn lessons from history in fighting against repression and attacks from the right. A strong left, based on the power of the working class, is needed to oppose imperialism and the right. Those who are resisting today — millions across Germany protesting the far-right racism of the AfD, the mass movement developing against the racist, anti-trans policies of Trump, and Serbian students struggling against corrupt capitalism — provide inspiration to the broader working class.

The working class is the majority of humanity and produces all of society's goods and services. "Without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel can turn." An organized determined working class has the power to stop tyrants and overthrow capitalism. "We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old." That socialist world is what we work towards. Join us! ★



SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

February 2025 - No. 32

Suggested donation \$5 / Solidarity donation \$10



Mass protest in Germany against the semi-fascist AfD

Leslie Kemp

Few people can remember a time when the world seemed so unstable, the future so uncertain, and the natural environment so precarious. This is the road that capitalism has taken and is an inevitable consequence of its drive for profits above humanity's needs and the health of the planet's ecosystem. Three of the most urgent threats — war and imperialism, the rise of the far right, and climate change — can be traced to capitalism.

Inter-imperialist Conflict

The fight for dominance between the world's two major power blocs — one led by the US and the other by China — is a driving force behind global processes and with Trump's election, is set to escalate on all fronts. Trade wars loom as the biggest imperialist economies use trade to reassert state power and control. This new era of imperialism follows a relatively stable period from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the recession of 2008-09, when the US was the single world power. However, the rise of China as an economic rival to the US, with its imperialist Belt and Road Initiative and rising exports, has led to competition for world dominance between the US and China blocs. The reversal of neoliberal globalization, the prevailing capitalist doctrine for three decades, has

shifted the strategy of the major powers to reindustrialize their own economies and towards protectionism, discarding neoliberalism's free trade *modus operandi*. Preparation for war between the imperialist powers is part of the logic.

Karl Marx said that "history repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as a farce." Today's inter-imperialist era can be compared to the time before World War I, when imperialist rivalries between European powers created a tinderbox that ignited into a world war. However, just because it is farce, it doesn't mean the tragedy is gone. Today the world seems drawn into a tragic farce with almost daily pronouncements from Trump — backed by his far-right sycophants — that are creating a topsy turvy ride for other major world powers as well as for ordinary people.

Inter-imperialist conflict is a defining feature of this new era of global capitalism. Conflicts and wars are increasing with a 25 percent jump in conflicts in 2024 over 2023 and a doubling of conflicts in the past five years. The Middle East is a "geopolitical cauldron." Trump's threat of the US takeover of Gaza has added fuel to the fire, angering Arab countries, jeopardizing the ceasefire and risking escalating war.

(continued on p. 15)

